

FACT SHEET:

Bush Homeland Security Funding Falls Short As Law Enforcement Struggles to Keep American Communities Safe

Even as middle class Americans are struggling to achieve financial security, the Bush budget ignores the very real challenges they are facing. It fails to create jobs, and instead creates record deficits. It shortchanges education, health care, veterans' benefits, and small business. Instead of helping working families, it provides additional tax breaks for those who need them least, and provides billions of dollars in new giveaways to HMOs and other wealthy corporate interests.

In 2001 and 2002, President Bush proposed completely inadequate budgets for homeland security –even vetoing homeland security funds in 2002. The Bush Administration has consistently underfunded homeland security efforts. In the fall of 2001, the Bush Administration requested only \$4.7 billion in supplemental funding for homeland security, which Democrats were successful in increasing to \$8.3 billion. In February 2002, the Bush Administration once again requested a budget that numerous independent analysts called “woefully inadequate.” Furthermore, in August 2002, the President even vetoed \$2.5 billion in needed homeland security funding.

The Bush Administration froze homeland security funding in 2003. Despite the numerous reports that came out in 2002 highlighting all of the deficiencies in the nation’s homeland security efforts, unbelievably in February 2003, the President proposed a budget that essentially froze overall homeland security funding.

The Bush budget provides only a modest increase of 4.6 percent for Homeland Security Department programs. Although the Bush Administration has highlighted that it is increasing overall homeland security funding by 9.7 percent this year, much of this increase is in one program at the Justice Department. Funding for Homeland Security Department programs increases by a much more modest 4.6 percent – particularly modest in light of the country’s enormous gaps in such areas as aviation, border and port security.

Significantly cuts funding available to police, firefighters, and medics. Despite the fact that police departments nationwide do not have the protective gear to safely secure a site after the detonation of a weapon of mass destruction and fire departments have only enough radios for half the firefighters on a shift, the Bush budget cuts First Responder grants by \$207 million, and the separate Firefighter Grant program within DHS by \$246 million, or 33 percent.

The Bush budget slashes aid to state and local law enforcement by a total of \$959 million or by 32 percent. It eliminates the local law enforcement block grant and the Byrne grant program, and slashes the COPS program by 87 percent.

Eliminates funding for Metropolitan Medical Response System. The Bush budget eliminates funding for the Metropolitan Medical Response System. This DHS program helps local first responders prepare for radiological and other terrorist attacks.

Provides no dedicated funding for interoperable communications grants. Although interoperable communications systems remain a critical need for the first responder community, the President's Budget requests no funding for this program -- a reduction of \$85 million from FY04. In addition, the Science and Technology Directorate received no funding for operations of Project SAFECOM, which coordinates all federal interoperable communications efforts.

Once again requests no direct appropriation for port security grants. A weapon of mass destruction detonated in a cargo container or at a seaport could cause thousands of casualties and an economic loss of \$58 billion to \$1 trillion. For the second year in a row, the President is requesting no direct appropriation for port security grants to help the nation's 361 seaports adopt important security enhancements, such as installing cameras, building fences, and posting guards. He identifies only \$46 million for port security – a 63 percent reduction – under a general Office of Domestic Preparedness grant program. Under this budget, the Coast Guard estimates that our ports will still be short over \$500 million.

Provides no funding for biotechnology detection for Postal Service. The President's budget for the U.S. Postal Service does not include \$779 million for biodetection technology the Postal Service has requested to help safeguard the public against anthrax and ricin-like attacks.

Dedicates no specific resources to help chemical facilities and nuclear power plants implement security enhancements. Today, there are over 7,000 chemical facilities where a toxic release could threaten more than 10,000 people. An incident at any of over 120 of those facilities could put more than one million people at risk. There are also 104 nuclear power plants in 31 states across the country – many near population centers. The Bush budget dedicates no specific resources for helping the nation's nuclear power plants and chemical facilities, most of which are in the private sector, implement needed security enhancements.

Despite enormous security gaps, provides only a modest 4.6 percent increase for border security. Numerous studies have highlighted the enormous gaps in our border security. Extensive portions of our northern border have no physical security, are not regularly patrolled, and are devoid of any electronic monitoring or aerial surveillance. In fact, there is only one border patrol agent for every 5.5 miles of our northern border, compared to five border agents for every mile of the southern border. Despite the inadequate staffing on the northern border, the Bush budget requests only \$5.1 billion for border security – a modest and inadequate increase of 4.6 percent.

Cuts funding for securing nuclear materials worldwide. The International Atomic Energy Agency has reported that there have already been 18 thefts worldwide of highly enriched uranium and plutonium, which can be used to make a nuclear bomb. But the Bush budget proposes to cut the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which helps secure loose nuclear material world wide – a critical component of protecting our homeland from a deadly terrorist attack. The Bush budget cuts funding for the program by \$42 million – or 9 percent.

